

Bobcat Hunter/Trapper Survey 2003

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Abstract

Hunting/trapping questionnaires were mailed to all bobcat hunter/trappers that received permits at the end of the 2003 season (October 18 to December 31). The response rate was 69.3% following removal of any duplicates. Seventy-six (76.3%) percent of the hunter/trappers returning surveys pursued bobcats in 2003. Of these, 34.9% reported registering a bobcat. Just under three-fourths (73.4%) of the respondents indicated that the bobcat population in 2003 was about the same or more abundant than it had been in 2002.

Methods

After completion of the 2003 season, a questionnaire was mailed to each of the 1,379 hunter/trappers who received a permit to pursue bobcats. A follow-up second mailing was then made to nonrespondents. Bobcat harvest permit holders were asked specific questions about their hunting and trapping methods used during the season (Fig. 1). Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNRUNIX production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All duplicate responses were removed from the survey pool.

Results

Of the 1,379 bobcat hunter/trappers queried, 956 non-duplicates responded, for a response rate of 69.3%. Seventy-six (76.3%) percent of these respondents reported hunting and/or trapping bobcats during the 2003 season (Table 1, Question 1). The most common reason given for not pursuing bobcats was "other"; frequent definitions given for "other" were injury/illness, time constraints, and poor conditions (Table 1, Question 2).

Nearly thirty-five (34.9%) percent of hunter/trappers who pursued bobcats were successful (Table 1, Question 3). Trappers spent on average 16.0 days afield with 6.0 sets/day and located on average 3.2 bobcats (Table 1, Question 4). Twenty-nine (28.9%) percent of these trappers were successful. Only 3.8% of trappers released bobcats from their traps during the 2003 season, and some trappers reported releasing up to 7 bobcats (Table 1, Question 5). Hunters who used dogs spent on average 5.7 days afield. Forty-seven (47.2%) percent of these hunters were successful. By comparison, hunters who hunted without dogs also spent on average 5.7 days afield, with a thirteen (12.5%) percent success rate (Table 1, Question 6). Nearly thirteen (12.7%) percent of hunters using trained dogs reported to have passed on treed bobcats (Table 1, Question 7). Hunting/trapping efforts were heaviest in Price, Sawyer, and Oneida counties (Table 1, Question 8), however 27 counties within the state were utilized.

Most hunter/trappers (73.4%) indicated that the bobcat population was about the same or more abundant than the previous year. Since bobcat hunter/trappers spend many hours driving around and looking for sign, they were also asked to give their impressions of fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf populations. Most hunter/trappers indicated that the coyote (71.9%), fisher (68.3%), and gray wolf (74.3%) populations were about the same or more abundant than the previous year. However, most hunter/trappers (68.1%) felt that the fox populations were about the same or less abundant than the previous year (Table 1, Question 9).

The most common habitat (37.6%) where bobcats were hunted or trapped was lowland forest-swamp/regeneration brush. The next most frequently hunted/trapped habitat was lowland forest-swamp/large mature (14.3%). The least common habitat (2.3%) was upland hardwood forest-thinned pole-sized trees (Table 1, Question 10).

Table 1. *Responses to the 2003 bobcat hunter/trapper survey.*

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2003 season? (Percent)

Yes	76.3
No	23.7
No answer = 0	

2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? (Percent)

Poor Weather	27.8
Too far to travel	8.3
Other	63.9
No answer = 440	

The most frequently stated reasons listed under 'other' were injury/illness, time constraints, and poor conditions.

3. Did you register a bobcat during the 2003 season (Oct 18 through Dec 31)? (Percent)

Yes	34.9
No	65.2
No answer = 6	

4. If you TRAPPED bobcat during the 2003 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean)

Number of days trapped	16.0
Average number of sets/day	6.0
Number of bobcats located	3.2

5. Did you release any bobcats from your traps during the season? (Percent)

Yes	3.8
No	96.3

If yes, how many? (Frequency)

1	10
2	8
≥3	4

6. If you HUNTED bobcat during the 2003 season, please answer the following questions:
(Expressed as mean).

Number of days hunted with dogs	5.7
Number of days hunted without dogs	5.7
Number of bobcats run with dogs	4.4
Number of bobcats located	6.3

7. Did you pass on any treed bobcats during the season?

Yes	12.7
No	87.3

If yes, how many (Frequency)?

1	21
2	29
3	10
4	10
≥5	4

8. In which counties did you hunt and/or trap bobcats? (Please list the county you spent the most time in first) (frequency, percent).

County	# of Trips	Percent
Ashland	63	6.3
Barron	5	0.5
Bayfield	45	4.5
Burnett	24	2.4
Chippewa	14	1.4
Douglas	49	4.9
Florence	26	2.6
Forest	67	6.7
Iron	60	6.0
Langlade	39	3.9
Lincoln	64	6.4
Marinette	51	5.1
Oconto	20	2.0
Oneida	76	7.6
Polk	7	0.7
Price	145	14.5
Rusk	51	5.1
Sawyer	89	8.9
Taylor	43	4.3
Vilas	30	3.0
Washburn	24	2.4
Other Counties	10	1.0

9. In your opinion, how does the current bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf population compare to last year? Check one for each species. (Percent)

	Bobcat	Fox	Coyote	Fisher	Gray Wolf
More abundant than last year	31.0	17.4	39.2	39.0	65.9
Less abundant than last year	7.9	30.5	19.0	15.8	2.4
About the same as last year	42.4	37.6	32.7	29.3	8.4
No opinion	18.7	14.5	9.1	16.0	23.2

10. In which habitat type did you hunt and/or trap for bobcat the most? (Percent)

Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Regeneration Brush	13.2
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Thinned / Pole-sized	3.8
Upland Pine/Spruce/Balsam – Large / Mature	4.4
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Regeneration Brush	37.6
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Thinned / Pole-sized	12.1
Lowland Forest/Swamp – Large / Mature	14.3
Upland Hardwoods – Regeneration Brush	8.1
Upland Hardwoods – Thinned / Pole-sized	2.3
Upland Hardwoods – Large / Mature	4.3

Wisconsin Bobcat Hunting / Trapping Questionnaire

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.

Form 2300-232 (R 12/03)

Dear Bobcat Hunter/Trapper:

You have been selected to help the Department of Natural Resources gather much needed information on Wisconsin's bobcat harvest. Please help our furbearer management program by completing this voluntary questionnaire. When you have completed the questionnaire, reverse the flap, tape the edge and mail. Using your stamp will save funds for management, even though no postage is required to return the questionnaire. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John F. Olson
Furbearer Ecologist
Bureau of Wildlife Management

1. Did you hunt and/or trap bobcat during the 2003 season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/>		2. If no, why didn't you hunt and/or trap for bobcat? Poor weather (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (3) <input type="checkbox"/> Please explain: _____ Too far to travel (2) <input type="checkbox"/> _____			
IF YOU DID NOT HUNT OR TRAP, STOP HERE AND RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU!					
3. Did you register a bobcat during the 2003 season (October 18 through December 31)? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/>		4. If you TRAPPED bobcat during the 2003 season, please answer the following questions: Number of days trapped _____ Average number of sets/day _____ Number of bobcats located _____			
5. Did you release any bobcats from your traps during the season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many? _____		6. If you HUNTED bobcat during the 2003 season, please answer the following questions: Number of days hunted with dogs _____ Number of days hunted without dogs _____ Number of bobcats run with dogs _____ Number of bobcats located _____			
7. Did you pass on any treed bobcats during the season? Yes (1) <input type="checkbox"/> No (2) <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, how many? _____		8. In which counties did you hunt and/or trap bobcats? (Please list the county you spent the most time in first.) _____ _____			
9. In your opinion, how does the current bobcat, fox, coyote, fisher, and gray wolf population compare to last year? (Check one for each species)					
	<u>Bobcat</u>	<u>Fox</u>	<u>Coyote</u>	<u>Fisher</u>	<u>Gray Wolf</u>
More abundant than last year	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>	(9) <input type="checkbox"/>	(13) <input type="checkbox"/>	(17) <input type="checkbox"/>
Less abundant than last year	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(6) <input type="checkbox"/>	(10) <input type="checkbox"/>	(14) <input type="checkbox"/>	(18) <input type="checkbox"/>
About the same as last year	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(7) <input type="checkbox"/>	(11) <input type="checkbox"/>	(15) <input type="checkbox"/>	(19) <input type="checkbox"/>
No opinion	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(8) <input type="checkbox"/>	(12) <input type="checkbox"/>	(16) <input type="checkbox"/>	(20) <input type="checkbox"/>
10. In which habitat type did you hunt and/or trap for bobcat the most? (Check one)		Please add any comments you would like to offer regarding bobcat populations, harvest regulations or overall bobcat management.			
<u>Upland Pine / Spruce / Balsam</u> Regeneration / Brush (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (3) <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Lowland Forest / Swamp</u> Regeneration / Brush (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (5) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (6) <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Upland Hardwoods</u> Regeneration / Brush (7) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinned / Pole-sized (8) <input type="checkbox"/> Large / Mature (9) <input type="checkbox"/>					

Figure 1. The 2003 Wisconsin bobcat hunting/trapping questionnaire.